

socialist standard

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Capitalism 2050

What the business analysts don't tell you



Cambodia:
life, death
and wages
page 12



Getting on in
capitalism
page 15



Channel 4 and
the real
parasites
page 21

socialist standard

FEBRUARY 2014
contents

FEATURES

A lack of imagination	10
The class struggle in Cambodia	12
The throwaway system	15
'The cost of living crisis'	16
Political Vocabularies	17

REGULARS

Pathfinders	4
Halo Halo!	6
Cooking the Books	7
Material World	8
Greasy Pole	9
Cooking the Books	18
Mixed Media	19
Reviews	20
Proper Gander	21
Meetings	22
50 Years Ago	23
Action Replay	23
Voice from the Back	24
Free Lunch	24

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Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make

new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join The Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we

will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

If you would like more details about The Socialist Party, complete and return the form on page 23.



socialist standard

FEBRUARY 2014

Editorial

Let's get political

WE ALL need to get more political. Not in the sense of supporting one of the major parties (definitely not, in fact), but the sooner people realise that it's useless complaining about price increases, unfair spending on this and that, and job losses, and get to the heart of the problem – class-divided, money-based society with a small, powerful, increasingly rich elite ruling the roost, supported by governments – the sooner we'll get to a real solution.

If you're not one of the rich ruling elite, who, supported by the state, collectively own and control the vast majority of the world's wealth, then economically and politically you're in the same class and you have a common interest regardless of all the other financial and sociological differences, and regardless of where in the world you live. What wealth you have in reality is small fry compared with the elite.

It doesn't matter whether you're a doctor, a nurse, an IT specialist or a cleaner, or whether you live in Burnley or Burma. Unless, of course, you also own, say, a factory or two and employ a couple of thousand workers to carry on producing your wealth. Rather than dwell on how much better off the family down the road or in the next street is, we should be giving thought to abolishing class-based society altogether because, by and large, it only serves the interest of the ruling elite. They, not asylum seekers or people claiming benefits down the road, are the real scroungers of this world and will continue to shaft us as long as we let them.

If you are looking for scroungers, you should direct your

spleen at the really rich – the top five percent or so of the world's population who own far, far more than the rest of us ever could, and through their ownership and control of the world's major resources severely restrict what the rest of us can and can't do. What the likes of the working class and the so-called middle class spend on their hobbies and interests is by comparison a drop in the ocean.

We are only shoved around because we let ourselves be. When it deems it necessary, the state promotes violence through its armies to achieve its ends, and tries to persuade people that it's the natural thing to do. So it's hardly surprising that people get conditioned into thinking that the existence of armed forces is both necessary and natural and pass this attitude on to their children.

Wars and preparations for war are to be condemned, but we should think a bit further and look to address the basic cause of violent society instead – minority, class-based ownership of the world's major resources, to the exclusion of the majority, and backed by the state with force. This inevitably leads to armed conflict between competing powers. Such conflicts are never in the interest of the peaceable majority, who should not let themselves get hoodwinked.

We should not waste time complaining about the symptoms of capitalism; rather, we should work to get rid of it, along with money itself, and replace it with worldwide common ownership of resources.

Dirty Secrets

THE POST-SAVILE paedophilia purge is continuing to create headlines not seen in the UK since the year 2000, and this time without the poison stirring spoon of Rebekah Brooks and the *News of the World*. Experience then showed that it didn't take much to whip up a lynch mob, and lo and behold, vigilante groups are now operating on the streets of Britain. In September last year one such group, called Letzgo Hunting, lured a Leicester man into a meeting and then publicly branded him a paedophile, after which the man hanged himself. In October it was reported in Bristol that a disabled gardener, attempting to photograph youths attacking his plants, was denounced as a kiddy-fiddler and promptly battered and burned to death in the street. This is significant, as burning is what you do to witches. Significant also that the newspapers universally described him as 'innocent' of the charge of paedophilia, the implication being that the murder would have been excusable otherwise.

The wave of moral outrage has been further fuelled by the appalling case of singer Ian Watkins, who described his 13 child sex charges, including an attempt to rape a one year old baby, as 'mega lolz'. Meanwhile one after another crumbling octogenarian is manhandled out of the grave and into the dock to answer charges committed half a century ago in a swinging sexist society that did everything to encourage such behaviour.

On the modern assumption that all men are potentially paedophiles, schools have turned into fortresses. The intended effect is that paedophiles no longer have easy access to children, but instead covert child sex trafficking has become big business. So too has online child porn, a fact not lost on many Filipino families who, it was reported last month, have been hiring out their children for online pay-per-view sex and rape sessions.

Last November an online sting involving a 10-year old Filipino girl called 'Sweetie', who supposedly engaged in sex acts with adults while online viewers paid a fee, helped to collar over 1,000 paedophiles around the world who flocked to the alluring Sweetie like moths to a flame. What was clever about this sting was that it was created in a Dutch computer



'Sweetie'

laboratory. 'Sweetie' was a computer graphics construct, not a real child. What was stupid about the paedophiles is that they didn't even try to cover their tracks, which makes one wonder how many smart paedophiles remain undiscovered. Watkins' computer porn, for example, was so deeply hidden that the police had to call in GCHQ to decrypt it.

With the witch-hunting mania in full spate reason is cowed into reticence and constructive debate hardly seems likely. What should socialists say, if asked about this problem?

Paedophilia is defined as adult sexual attraction to prepubescent children up to the age of 11. Sex with a person under 16 in the UK is defined as statutory rape, for which the

offender is placed on the sex offenders register. In the popular press this makes them a paedophile and a rapist by definition.

The problem with this is that the age of consent is an arbitrary line in the sand. A recent proposal to lower this to 15 had David Cameron running away in shivers, yet Europe-wide the statutory age varies from 13 in Spain and 14 in Italy and Germany through to 18 in Turkey (in 19th century Britain it was 12, in some American states 10, in Delaware 7).

Another problem is that capitalism has no qualms about sexualising childhood in order to sell products to young wage and pocket money earners. Remember the Peek-a-Boo Stripper

Pole Dancing kit (age 6+) sold in Tesco's toy section? And let's not forget the push-up bra (age 7), the Playboy Bunny school merchandise or Bratz Hooker Babies (age 9), dolls made up as prostitutes with high heels and leather thongs.



Bratz dolls

Notwithstanding any of this, what society wants is not to accommodate or contain or neutralise or even understand paedophilia but to destroy it root and branch, as it once did (and still does elsewhere in the world) with homosexuality. Whether that's possible, medically speaking, is an open question. The scientific research into paedophilia is not as extensive as public concern would seem to demand. Various causes are identified and various treatments proposed including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), hormone treatment, and physical castration. Such treatments are limited because much child abuse is not caused by sexual impulses but by other motivators such as anger or a desire to control. In addition, it is the opinion of some doctors that a cure has not been found because scientists aren't really looking. In capitalist terms, the market isn't there. Nobody wants to cure witches, as the disabled Bristol gardener found out.

Might there be paedophiles in socialism? At present the science can't tell us. Paedophilia is a broad spectrum condition, with biological as well as social factors in play. Whether any of these biological factors have a genetic base remains unestablished, but even if they did, genetic factors never work alone but always interact with a particular set of social conditions.

What we can say with more confidence is that those many forms of sex and child abuse based on obsessions with power would find no nourishment in socialism because the structures of oppression, dominance and impotence would no longer exist.

Be that as it may, if a problem existed socialism would have to deal with it, and the first priority would be to protect children. Studies suggest that many paedophiles have no desire to hurt children but a minority do, and there seems little room for doubt that in socialism dangerous paedophiles would, like any dangerous and out of control individual, have to be kept under restraint for the common good, though not for the purpose of punishment but in order that a successful and humane treatment could be found. For the rest, there would have to be a democratic debate about what was acceptable sexual preference and what was unacceptable medical condition. It could have implications for civil liberties, freedom of movement, sexual licence, levels of supervision of children, equality status of individuals. We can't say today how it would proceed or how it would turn out, but it would be an informed hunt for solutions, not an inflamed hunt for witches.

Capitalism and apartheid

Dear Editors

I would question the claim made in the article 'Where Mandela Failed' (*Socialist Standard*, January 2014), thus:

Mandela had to let the big mining corporations operate as usual. They too had in fact been opposed to apartheid as it was impeding the normal operation of capitalism in South Africa. They wanted, and got, a non-racial capitalism.'

I think this is far too sweeping if it is intended as some kind of timeless statement of fact and buys too readily into the liberal myth that capitalism and apartheid were fundamentally at odds with each other (as Merle Lipton argued in her seminal 1985 work, *Capitalism and Apartheid*) and, in so doing, lends itself to an unduly mechanistic explanation for the demise of apartheid which discounts or downplays the role of political action and human agency – in particular, the township uprisings and the huge costs this imposed on the state.

Like all myths, this particular one has an element of truth in it but what is not sufficiently acknowledged is the other side of the argument. In fact, the big mining corporations – above all, the giant Anglo-American corporation – did very nicely out of apartheid and, historically speaking, were instrumental in pushing for many of the early measures that put in place the migrant labour system, which measures formed much of the legislative groundwork upon which the system of apartheid was later formally erected – like the Native Reserves policy, the Pass Laws and the imposition of poll and hut taxes to force black peasants into the money economy and so make them dependent on employment in the mines. The labour intensive nature of mining required a huge labour force and the corporations worked hand in glove with the state to ensure a steady flow of cheap black labour. Behind the shrewdly crafted image – mainly for foreign consumption, I suspect, and also to safeguard substantial foreign holdings, in the case of Anglo-American, in places like Canada and the US – which portrayed corporations, like Anglo-American, as the valiant and fearless foes of apartheid, these same corporations were involved up to their greasy necks in a cosy incestuous relationship with the racist state in which each saw good reason to

cooperate with the other. The state relied heavily on the tax revenues it obtained from the mining companies while, reciprocally, the mining companies benefitted enormously from the racist repression that the state enacted.

As John Summa put it in an article appropriately entitled 'Anglo-American Corporation – a Pillar of Apartheid':

'Anglo-American has an anti-labor history that involves the use of the repressive services of the apartheid security apparatus, as well as its own security personnel, to control and exploit workers. Being the world's largest private employer of black labor and the world's largest producer of gold and diamonds means Anglo is also one of the world's biggest exploiters of cheap black mine labor.' (*The Multinational Monitor*, September 1988)

It was pragmatism rather than principle than governed Anglo-American's relationship with the Apartheid state. Its putative opposition to apartheid was more often than not forced upon it by the rise of worker militancy (like the wave of mineworkers strikes in the 80s) – the very thing that you downplay – than by rhetorical commitment to the so-called free market. Anglo-American's call for black trade unions to be granted official recognition – like the National Union of Mineworkers – was made, not out of concern for the rights of workers, but out of expediency in the face of unofficial wildcat strikes where a mechanism of negotiation and worker self-discipline was lacking. Ironically this same NUM has become the object of much hatred and contempt among black mineworkers for siding with the authorities in the Marikana miners' strike in 2012 in which police shot dead some 44 miners.

One of the main arguments in favour of the liberal position that capitalism and apartheid were somehow fundamentally irreconcilable was that the latter made for an endemic shortage of skilled labour by restricting skilled and semi-skilled occupations to the minority white population only: the so called 'colour bar'. The problem with this argument is that, firstly it does not apply so much to industries like mining and agriculture which remained largely labour intensive (although newer mines opened up after the WWII tended to be more capital intensive and this may have lead to some opposition to the colour bar from some of the more progressive mining companies from

the 1970s onwards, but certainly not all). The article, however, conveys the impression that it was the mining sector that was in the very vanguard of capitalist opposition to apartheid which, I suggest, is somewhat misleading. Secondly, Oppenheimer himself and others in the white liberal establishment were, as a matter of fact, quite amenable to the idea of retaining the colour bar providing it could be made less restrictive. This was what lay behind the concept of the so called 'floating' colour bar which could be raised as and when the need for more skilled labour became more pressing and, indeed, to an extent the government went along with this idea in practice. In theory, this could have gone a long way to address the problem of skills shortages, together with the government policy of encouraging white inward migration from Europe and elsewhere but, of course, other factors intervened which are precisely the ones you have tended to overlook in your analysis.

If there is any merit in the argument you put forward here, and undeniably there is some, it would relate more to the manufacturing sector (and also, to an extent, the high skill end of the larger services sector) rather than the mining sector as such (which along with agriculture, formed the traditional twin bastions of the apartheid economy). Manufacturing became increasingly important in the post war era and it was here that the problem of skill shortages was most acute and obvious. However, even in the case of manufacturing, the relationship with the apartheid state was ambivalent, to say the least. Some branches of manufacturing, such as armaments production, ironically prospered precisely because of the imposition of sanctions against Apartheid. The same, incidentally, could be said of Anglo-American which, because of the pull-out of foreign capital – disinvestment was able to massively expand its portfolio of acquisitions bought at knock down prices, including some manufacturing businesses too.

Robin Cox (by email)

Reply: There is no fundamental disagreement here. You make some good points which illustrate well how capitalist interests are often divided and in conflict among themselves, and how capitalist and state aims do not always coincide—*Editors*.

For better for worse ...

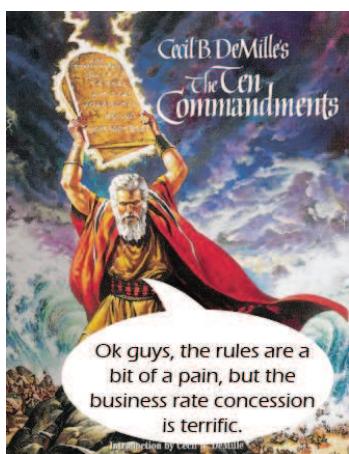
ONE OF the functions of government is to ensure the existence of an adequate supply of the next generation of workers; suitably trained to know their place, and with no aspirations for anything more fulfilling in life than a place on the capitalist machine's profit production line.

And if a state mis-education alone is not enough to guarantee young workers a job stacking shelves in the local pound shop, politicians assume that regular religious interference in their lives to further confuse and demoralise them will help.

It's no surprise then that the state takes an interest in the institution of marriage and legislates on where parents of the next generation of workers can get hitched. Register Office weddings are no problem, nor are the mainstream church weddings or those carried out in synagogues or mosques. Some of the premises of the lesser known, and the more bizarre

gods however, just don't come up to scratch, however luxurious or opulent they are.

It shouldn't really matter these days *which* god workers are indoctrinated in, you might think. One non-existent god is as good as another, but no, it's not that simple. The next generation of workers need to be born to parents who, if believers, are only married in the premises of a properly government approved god. At least, this has been the position until now.



It's Not Your Country

MILITARY MARCHING, patriotic tunes and songs - they are mostly intended to give the impression that it's 'your' country, that you should be proud of it, that your leaders are there to protect you, that the division into rich and poor is pre-ordained (perhaps by some god or other) and there's nothing you can do about it.

You may well, indeed, take pride in the place you live - its landscape, architecture, people, etc, and there's nothing wrong with that. But in terms of possession, ownership and control, it's the rich elite, the few percent in any country, who collectively own the world's land and resources (including what you think of as your country), and they would naturally prefer people to hold the view that this is an immutable state of affairs, all the more to hold on to their power, backed up by governments and armies. It's utter tosh. They only keep their power (and send millions of us to die in wars to help them do so) because the majority allow them to, and continue to let themselves be duped by militaristic displays and patriotic twaddle.

No doubt 2014 will see more attempts to persuade us all of the merits of patriotism and sacrifice for our country. The more people who see through it the better. We have more in common with the ordinary people of all other countries than we have with the leaders of 'our' own.

Generally, capitalism is not patriotic and doesn't care where in the world its products are made. No profit, no production is the rule, as employees over decades have found out to their cost. Capitalism will cut costs where

In December, however, there was a court case where for some unknown reason a couple decided they wanted to get married in the Church of Scientology. Unfortunately there was a 1970 High Court ruling in the way which said that Scientology services were not 'acts of worship'.

However after duly reflecting on the nature of the gods and their need to be suitably worshipped, the Supreme Court Justices decided that the 1970 ruling was out of date. It was not the job of the Registrar General of Births, Marriages and Deaths to venture into 'fine theological or liturgical niceties' they said. Which is fine as far as it goes. Less state interference in our lives is always welcome.

But, unleashing a can of theological worms they added, 'Religion should not be confined to religions which recognise a supreme deity'. What's that? Jesus Christ! The God bothering business is overloaded with self-proclaimed prophets and Holy Joes jumping on the Jesus bandwagon already. Are L Ron Hubbard and his ilk going to be allowed to officially join this conman's circus as well?

There may be more to this story than meets the eye. Religious establishments are exempted from paying business rates. Is it possible that this is why the 'Church' of Scientology, with its vast property holdings is so keen to conduct marriages? Local Government minister Brandon Lewis said he was 'very concerned' about the ruling and its implications for business rates. We bet he was.

Signs that religious mumbo-jumbo is becoming a free for all are appearing in the USA as well. Following the installation of a monument inscribed with the Ten Commandments at the Oklahoma state Capitol, a Satanic group have submitted an application to erect a seven foot tall statue of Satan on a throne complete with horns, wings and a beard. 'The statue will have a functional purpose as a chair where people of all ages may sit on the lap of Satan for inspiration and contemplation' they said.

Requests to install a monument have also been made by the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster. This won't end well, will it?

NW

possible and, in general, go wherever costs are lowest for the production of goods of a given quality. This means paying wages which are as low as it can get away with and using as few workers as possible. Any business that doesn't operate on these principles will quickly go under.

The other side of the coin is that, as an employee, if your services are no longer required, then it's bye-bye. To support British industry, in so far as there is such a thing, is merely to prefer one set of capitalists exploiting you in preference to another. It's not 'your' country, it belongs to the rich elite. To think otherwise is naive in the extreme. Unless you are a capitalist yourself, your interests are diametrically opposed to those of the capitalist system and the only campaigning you should be doing is to get rid of it.

ROD SHAW



Against 'redistributionism'

ON 5 December there was an interesting meeting in New York organised by the Marxist-Humanist Initiative (MHI) and Internationalist Perspective (IP). It's on YouTube at <http://tinyurl.ms/yvwx>. Like us, the four speakers all argued that the populist policy advocated by trade unions and leftwing demagogues of redistributing income from the rich to the working class was not a way out of the crisis.

Anne Jaclard (MHI) pointed out that this was a typical example of trying to reform capitalism to make it work in the interest of the working class, but this could not be done. Pursuing it was not just futile but a diversion from acting to get rid of capitalism. Redistributive politics, or 'redistributionism', was a view that needed to be combatted. This was not to say that workers should not try to get more under capitalism; that was part of the class struggle.

Sander (IP) said that the mistake of the 'redistributionists' was the common one of assuming that the aim of production today was consumption whereas it was the production of goods not as such but as value with the aim of accumulating more and more of it. Diverting value which otherwise would be invested by capitalist firms in production would lead to inflation as the goods on which to spend it would not get produced.

Andrew Kliman (MHI) presented the classic case against 'underconsumptionist' theories of capitalism, pointing out that what the workers could not buy could be bought by capitalists whether to consume or to invest in production. That workers could not buy back all they produced could not be the explanation of capitalist crises as this was the case also in boom times; in fact, if this was the case capitalism ought to be in a permanent slump and should have collapsed long ago. The mistake was to see 'consumption' as just what the workers and capitalists bought to consume, whereas 'effective demand' also included what the capitalists invested in production. It was changes in this, as the rate of profit went up or down, that determined capitalism's boom/slump cycle. He denied that there had been a shift of income from workers to capitalists in the period leading up to the outbreak of the slump in 2008 and that this was its cause. He claimed that working class living standards had not fallen during this period. The only way out of a slump, he said, was a devaluation of existing capital that would restore the rate of profit.

McIntosh (PI) disagreed that working class living standards hadn't fallen in the decades up to 2008 but agreed that the only way out of a slump was a devaluation of capital. It was not the redistributive policies of the New Deal that had ended the slump of the 1930s. According to him, it was the Second World War and the massive devaluation of capital through its destruction that did this. The way-out for the working class was not an attempted redistribution of income in their favour (as now being proposed by the new Mayor of New York De Blasio as well as unions and the Left), but an end to production as value. He was in favour of workers struggling for higher wages but whether wages were high or low, they still involved exploitation. What was needed was production directly to meet human needs and so the end of value, money and wage-labour altogether.

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THE SHANTY towns that choke the cities of the developing world are experiencing unstoppable growth, expanding by more than a million people every week, according to the UN. It maintains that over the next 30 years, the population of African and Asian cities will double, adding 1.7 billion people – more than the current populations of the US and China combined. Every major metropolis has its share of slums; the U.N. estimates that one-third of the developing world's urban population lives in them, with nearly 40 percent of East Asian urban dwellers living in slum conditions. The majority of this urban poor will be under 25, unemployed and vulnerable to religious fundamentalism.

A 2002 report concluded that more young people below the age of 18 are killed by guns each year in Rio de Janeiro than in many areas of the world formally at war. The study concluded that there are strong similarities between children involved in drug wars in Rio's slums and child soldiers elsewhere in the world. There are estimated to be between 5-6,000 armed children in Rio. The report details how the gangs employ teenagers to guard their domains. Sometimes they are even given ranks and called soldiers. The levels of violence are comparable to a war zone. In the last 14 years, for instance, almost 4,000 under-18-year-olds were killed by firearms in Rio alone. That compares, the report says, with just under 500 children killed in the fighting between Palestinians and Israelis in the same period.

Sri Lanka's capital city Colombo is home to over 30 percent of the country's population, one in every two people living in the Greater Colombo Area is a slum dweller.

Dhaka, the Bangladeshi capital, is home to 34 percent of the country's population and is the fastest growing city in Asia – around 40 percent of those living in Dhaka are slum dwellers.

In India fully half the population of the capital, New Delhi, lives in slums, while the figure could be as high as 60 percent in glittering Mumbai. Nationwide 93 million people are estimated to be living in slums.

Ming Zhang, the World Bank sector manager for Urban Water and Disaster Management for South Asia, predicted that the urban population in South Asia would double in the next 25 years. Already one in every four persons is categorised under 'informal population' or living in shanties or slums in the urban areas of the region.

Regional experts and those from the World Bank agree that most of the problems faced by the cities are man-made, primarily due to lack of proper planning.

If we thought about proper urban planning, institutional coherence and community participation, we would be able to address a big chunk of this problem,' Abha Joshi-Ghani, the World Bank's Sector Manager for Finance Economics and Urban Planning explained. 'We are depleting our resources by inefficient and indiscriminate use of resources.' Joshi-Ghani went on to

say that any relocation of slum-dwellers has to take into consideration the incomes and lifestyles of those affected, which, if disrupted, could turn the solution itself into a problem. 'Many think that cities make people poor, when in fact cities attract the poor who think they can make a better living there' she said.

'It's pointless trying to control urban growth by stopping migration,' George Martine, a demographer and the author of the report said. 'It doesn't work. We have to



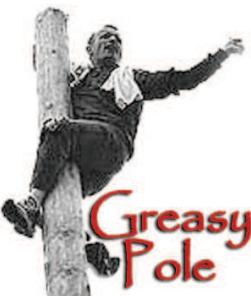
change mindsets and take a different stance. We're at a crossroads and can still make decisions which will make cities sustainable. If we don't make the right decisions the result will be chaos' (<http://news.independent.co.uk/world/politics/article2714169.ece>).

The modern slum is not the result of a lack of resources. It is the product of the capitalist profit system. The only way to free humanity of the slums is to overthrow the system that breeds them. The only way to ensure that every single human being on the planet has an equal chance to enjoy a life free from material deprivation is a world where all the resources of the planet have become the common heritage of all humanity. Another world is possible but it has to be a non-capitalist – a socialist – world, offering decent comfortable housing for all in well-ordered communities.

Engels wrote of the slums of Britain, offering clear descriptions of the degradation that was to be found. He also wrote of a possible future where urban and rural were no longer separate entities:

'The abolition of the antagonism between town and country is now not only possible, it has become an absolute necessity for industrial production itself. It has also become a necessity for agricultural production, and is, above all, essential to the maintenance of the public health. Only through the amalgamation of city and country can the present poisoning of air, water, and localities, be put at an end and the waste filth of the cities be used for the cultivation of vegetation rather than the spreading of disease' (Anti-Dühring, chapter 9).

ALJO



Ouch! What a Lovely War

AMONG THE pitiless military killers of World War One there was reputed to be a German General who named one of his problems as the determination of British soldiers to 'fight like lions'. But then – 'lions led by donkeys'. More recently there has been a Minister of Education in a British government who scorned anyone who sympathised with that German assessment: '...an unhappy compulsion ...to denigrate virtues such as patriotism, honour and courage', regarding the war '... through the fictional prism of drama such as *Oh! What A Lovely War*, *The Monocled Mutineer* and *Blackadder*, as a misbegotten shambles – a series of catastrophic mistakes perpetrated by an out-of-touch elite. Even to this day there are Left-wing academics all too happy to feed those myths'.

Centenary

To put the matter into perspective – Michael Gove is the MP for the rock-solid Tory seat of Surrey Heath and the Secretary of State for Education. As a key member of the Cameron government – and of the Notting Hill Set – he has lived up to his reputation for managing education not as some kind of personal encouragement to develop but as formal discipline towards a designed conclusion. In this way Gove has provoked the anger and despair of committed teachers but has recommended himself to his leader. After Cameron recently announced that the centenary of the start of the War would be distorted into a celebration of allegedly unique British courage and humanity, Gove was quick to approve: 'The ruthless Social Darwinism of the German elites, the pitiless approach they took to occupation, their aggressively expansionist war aims and their scorn for the international order all made resistance more than justified'.

Errors

But this misbegotten view of an historical event which cost the lives of tens of millions and left the world even less secure than before contains some crucial errors. The persistent denunciation of the war, of its bungling leaders and swamps of casualties, is by no means exclusively the work of 'Left wing academics'. Among the most publicised of critics was the late Alan Clark, whose book *The Donkeys* was a bitter exposure of the generals who ordered the British Army into so many historical calamities. But Clark would have been contemptuously amused by the idea that he was 'left-wing'. He inherited, apart from much else, the mediaeval Saltwood Castle in Sussex. At first he was rejected by Conservative Central Office as too 'right wing' but he eventually became a Tory MP, at first for Plymouth Sutton and then Kensington and Chelsea. He was a keen admirer of both Enoch Powell and Margaret Thatcher.

Diplomacy

Another example which undermines Gove's slapdash thinking is Niall Ferguson, whose opinions on the War were markedly controversial – for example he argued that in 1914 Germany was forced into a preventive war by the pressures of British diplomacy which encouraged a regional war to develop into a world conflict. In detail Ferguson has many differences with Gove's crude acceptance of the official Tory line but he is far from a 'left-winger' for he consistently describes himself as

'a Thatcherite'. It is useful also to mention a man who actually endured the trenches and all that followed. Harry Patch died in July 2009. He was known as 'The Last Fighting Tommy' – a lone survivor of the war during which he endured, apart from others, the Battle of Passchendaele. A patriotic Tory, his opinions on his time in the trenches are all too clear: the war was 'not worth one life'; the generals and politicians were 'organising nothing better than mass murder'.

Battlefields

Among the events to mark the centenary will be organised visits by school parties to the battlefields, to see where the trenches were, clamber into the dug-outs, stand in the graveyards, look up at the massive memorials ...There has to be some interest, accentuated by Gove's speech, about these visits. Will the children be free to make their own judgements about what they see, about the war and what came out of it? There is nothing in Gove's record to encourage any confidence that the visits will not be heavily stage-managed to ensure the right – from the point of view of the government – outcome. Consider that one of the first actions of the Ministry of Education when Gove took over was to provide every school with a copy of the King James bible inscribed with the message 'Presented by the Secretary of State for Education'. Before that he had unwisely trumpeted his version of the outcome of the war in Iraq: 'The liberation of Iraq has actually been that rarest of things – a proper British foreign policy success... now a fully functioning democracy with a free press, properly contested elections and an independent judiciary'.

Adoption

When he was still a baby Gove was adopted after his mother could not cope, in the stresses typical of the year 1967, with the demands of looking after a child. Gove's adoptive parents were caring and supportive but he admits to always being 'noisy by nature'; he later wrote to some of his school teachers to apologise for his disruptive behaviour. Importantly, Gove's adoption was rated as a success, enabling him to attend private school, to graduate at Oxford and to hold down jobs as a journalist with *The Times*, followed by his first steps up the parliamentary Greasy Pole. But his progress has been notable for a succession of manufactured crises. In February 2011 a judge ruled that his decision to abolish the Building Schools For The Future programme amounted to 'an abuse of power'. In March 2012 he and his staff were said to have destroyed email correspondence to frustrate Freedom Of Information requests. In addition to such examples Gove has been the subject of an extraordinary number of protests of No Confidence from various teachers' organisations including one in May last which drew complaints about systematic bullying, fear and intimidation - and this by the Minister responsible for overlooking children's education. But there is nothing to indicate that there is likely to be any change. Gove's response to it all – and to the appalling misery and bloodshed of the First World War – means that the only proper response to him and his kind is, in a word which every teacher will understand – exclusion.

IVAN

A lack of imagination

We look at what a capitalist corporation imagines 2050 could be like. But will it if capitalism continues?

Imagine 2050 is the title of a joint report recently dreamt up by the environmental services multinational Veolia, and partnered by a group of economists ensconced in the British citadel of capitalist ideology – the London School of Economics. Veolia's vision of the future describes 'one future city in which system-level planning has created a dense, resource-efficient society characterised by collaborative consumption, shared ownership and local self-reliance'. Vague; but sounds kind of nice.

Telescoping the reader's imagination the storyline continues: The 2050 home includes a kitchen where waste is sorted by nanoscopic robots and food packaging that is designed to degrade in line with sell-by dates. Waste from the bin-less home will be collected via a pneumatic network, by an underground network, and transferred to treatment facilities. This 24/7 waste collection service will reduce the presence of vehicles in the city, helping to cut greenhouse gas emissions.'

And it doesn't end there for these lucky urbanites as their homes will also feature, 'ultrasonic baths, self-cleaning surfaces and water purification based on systems found in plants and bacteria'. And they'll also enjoy, '3D printers and new paints and materials optimising natural light and improving energy conservation' (edie.net).

Enter the LSE economists and their unwavering quest for a 'better capitalism'. One that is civilised, caring; even cuddly. Slightly shrewder now since Her Majesty's 2010 visit to the citadel when they were at a collective loss to explain her probing question on why the prevailing depression had occurred, and why were they unable to predict it? A tad wiser now? Perhaps they'd flicked through a history book of the last century or two which would reveal that slumps and depressions are endemic to capitalism. As are wars, mass starvation amidst plenty, and gross social deprivation. So *Imagine 2050* adds a one sentence rider that 'models a scenario in which disparate and unregulated development has led to a resource-hungry urban sprawl where private consumption and ownership is prioritised over long-term communal thinking'. Sounds familiar? Yes, that's right; it's where city-dwellers the world over live right now.

Veolia: profit from water

It's wise under capitalism to give some thought to who you enter into partnerships with. The LSE's partner, Veolia, has an interesting past. Its origins lie in an 1853 imperial decree by Napoleon III creating its capitalist foundations in a company called Compagnie Générale des Eaux [CGE]. Turning water into a commodity through the human labour necessary for a network of reservoirs, filtration and piping, CGE initially supplied water to Lyon, and then obtained a 50-year concession to supply water to Parisians. Profits gained through surplus value gushed so that in 1976, a new, ambitious CEO, Guy Dejouany, branched out into other market sectors. Through a succession



of takeovers of companies as diverse as waste management through to the media came the creation of Vivendi Universal, Vivendi Environment, and finally the catch-all name, Veolia. And there was a sound reason for the change of name. It's wise to distance yourself from a bad name, and Vivendi had become synonymous with bribery and fraud.

During 1996, five out of 13 directors on the board of Vivendi were under investigation for corruption. In 1997, Vivendi executives colluded with civil servants to channel illegal commissions of up to \$86 million – primarily to Jacques Chirac's party (the RPR) from public contracts worth \$3.3 billion. Italian courts sentenced the Milan City Council president to three years in prison for accepting a \$2 million bribe from a Vivendi subsidiary during bidding on a \$100 million contract. In 2002 a Vivendi CEO was convicted of fraud by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (corporatewatch.org). There were several other high profile allegations, but when you have allies at the centre of financial and political circles accusations generally evaporate.

In 2003 Veolia Environnement S.A was created and headquartered in Paris. It had grown into the biggest water service company in the world. Waste management, energy and transport are its other interests in a business that in 2012 encompassed 48 countries, employed 318,376 people who provided takings set at €29.4 billion. Veolia's business model

What Veolia sees...

Imagine 2050

1 Infomile
The liquid and solid material will undergo a treatment to break the matter down into its chemical and building blocks. Due to this process, it will be possible to recycle any type of material.

How?
Waste will be deposited down the drain to a treatment facility which will dissolve the waste into its chemical building blocks which can be sent for sorting/processing.

2 Nanobot waste sorters
Products for recycling will be sorted by nanobots that separate materials based on their chemical composition, shape, colour and on their physical and chemical properties.

How?
In the future, mixtures of materials will be shredded into microscopic particles and sorted by nanobots that are programmed to identify, separate and collect the materials in a precise form so they can be reused to industry. This will help to reduce the amount of waste that cannot be used and has to be thrown away to landfill sites.

It's happening now
Veolia has developed a nanobot technology to sort plastic waste by intelligent equipment implemented at Padwick Mill. West Yorkshire uses near-infrared sensors and pneumatic separation systems to identify the materials and sort them based on their chemical composition. These sorted bottles can then be delivered directly to manufacturers allowing them to use large amounts of recycled plastic in new bottles.

3 Homes that generate power every day
Organic waste that is generated at home will be used as fuel to generate electricity and heat. This will reduce the carbon footprint from energy consumed at home.

How?
Municipal collection vehicles collect home, municipal and energy distribution trades back to homes. This will develop local energy generation and reduce efficiency losses from the transfer of energy from large scale production.

4 Intelligent packaging
Packaging will be active and able to control the environment inside the packaging creating a more pleasant environment. It will also self-degrade after the content expires.

How?
Intelligent packaging will contain substances that map the storage conditions and the outside of the packaging will change colour at a rate that is affected by the storage temperature. This will allow the consumer to know the safe-to-eat colour for longer than one kept in a warm meal. Both these means that food will last longer and more food will be eaten.

5 Underground collection network
All municipal waste will be collected via a pneumatic system and transferred to waste sites for treatment facilities. This will reduce the presence of vehicles in the city and will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sound and visual nuisances which result from the collection of waste by vehicles in the city.

How?
Pneumatic collection vehicles will be replaced by one port integrated into waste allowing more waste to be collected and less vehicles drive waste to the treatment facilities.

It's happening now
Waste is currently collected by vehicles and transported to waste sites for treatment facilities. This is approximately 80% of the waste in the UK and connects around 2200 dwellings within the London Borough of Hackney. The waste collection and heating scheme is offering energy at a slightly lower cost and goes increased supply resilience and a low carbon solution to waste.

Imagine 2050

Illustrations by Four Environment

was succinctly revealed when its CEO said, 'Many of the best performing contracts are those where a private operator assumes the operational and commercial risks, but not the major capital expenditures' (fwwatch.org). Underlying this is the unspoken, always denied, premise that corporations expect governments to pick up the bill for those capital expenditures. Ideological support from economists and an array of apologists for capitalism underpin the ease with which corporations like Veolia gain profitable contracts in the name of privatisation, market efficiency, and the ubiquitously touted 'ownership society'. Avoiding major capital investment, leasing assets and simply collecting revenues ensures profits flow like water from a tap.

Like all capitalist enterprises Veolia's principal goal is to maximise profits to ensure shareholder returns. Veolia's strategy to attain that goal has a history of imposing, 'lower wages and reducing retirement, health care and other benefits; break contracts; enforce lower work standards detrimental to workers and the community; and reduce the workplace environment to levels below safety standards' (workers.org). Not content with that in the name of the 'ownership society' Veolia uses, 'other cost cutting measures (inadequate testing, treatment and maintenance), illegal dumping and processing of toxic material. Problems range from service outages, to illegal sewage discharges, to safety hazards, explosions, neglected equipment, and lower water quality'. There are multiple incidents reported globally concerning Veolia's corporate strategies. Mismanagement of the water supplies has seen scores of law suits and non-renewal of contracts. Even in Veolia's own backyard of Paris, after 25 years, the city decided, 'not to renew its contract with Veolia in order to stabilize water rates and save money – which it has' (corporatewatch.org).

How many will benefit?

'Imagine 2050' ends with a piece of advice from LSE senior research fellow for LSE Cities Dr Savvas Verdis: 'A circular economy cannot be built piecemeal, a systems-wide approach is essential'. Obviously, given their partnership with Veolia the LSE economists imagine that this nebulous circular economy is possible under capitalism utilising corporations like their partner. To encourage businesses to become involved in this business idea Circular Economy 100 has



been founded. Knowledge of who they're dealing with resonates with their mission statement: 'The Foundation has created the Circular Economy 100 programme to support business in unlocking this commercial opportunity and to enable them to benefit from subsequent first mover advantages' (ellenmacarthurfoundation.org). Which translates as: There are profits to be made, but you have to get in quick before they dry up. Marketing and PR reports seek to hide the truths beneath the carefully worded gloss. Which is precisely what 'Imagine 2050' does. Globally, 1.1 billion people lack access to clean water, 2.6 billion people have no access to basic sanitation. In addition, 2 million children die annually due to easily preventable water borne diseases, and approximately 5000 children die from preventable diarrhoea-related diseases every day. Veolia recently wrote to the Human Rights Council's independent expert of its efforts to help poor areas of the world and 'boasted about how it has expanded water access, particularly to those living in remote areas'. However one month later, 'it told credit analysts on Wall Street that it prioritized 'financially sound clients' in dense urban areas' (corporatewatch.org). And if the urbanite can't pay Veolia's bill? 'An employee at Veolia in France has been sacked for refusing to cut off the water supply to poor families. The man, named in the French media only as Mark, had been employed at

Veolia for 20 years but was handed his dismissal letter on April 4th for his refusal to implement the cut-offs following the non-payment of bills' (thelocal.fr/19 April 2013).

UN-Habitats research reveals that the world's slum population has already grown by 75 million in just three years. And by 2050, expectation is that one in three people will live in urban slums. How many do you believe will benefit from the technology described in *Imagine 2050*?

PR has another purpose. To create a 'feelgood factor'. To beef up confidence in the future. It doesn't just try to sell you the commodities, it sells you hope. Fortunately, you can only stack bullshit so high before everyone realises it stinks. Ideologists like the LSE's economists like to tell us that there is no alternative. Capitalism is eternal and everlasting. They seem incapable of unlocking their own imaginations from the prison of capitalism's markets. But the technology that they describe in *Imagine 2050* is helping to shape people's thinking and provide the nails for capitalism's coffin. Those technologies and many others are already in development. A barrier exists for the vast majority to those technologies. And that barrier is capitalism. Jamming its grubby little fingers into the dam are apologists like the LSE's economists. And the nicest thing that can be said about them is that they lack imagination.

ANDY MATTHEWS



The class struggle in Cambodia

In some parts of the world workers are still being shot down for asking for higher wages.

During 2013 in Cambodia (the Khmer name is Kampuchea), the Khmer working class – particularly the half million garment factory workers – were active in the class struggle between capital and labour, clashing with the authoritarian government of Hun Sen and the repressive forces of the Cambodian police and military. The resistance of the garment factory workers to the downward economic pressures of the capitalist class culminated after a two week national strike in the New Year of 2014 with four workers killed and twenty seven injured when police and a deployment of an elite unit of soldiers, Special Command Unit 911 opened fire with AK-47s into a group of workers.

The workers' economic struggle has become allied with the protest movement for liberalism and bourgeois democracy in Cambodia which is associated with Sam Rainsy and his 'Party of Rescuing the Nation.' They allege electoral fraud in the July 2013 elections

and claim they were cheated out of winning the election. This liberal political grouping have promised the garment factory workers their desired wage increase to \$263 per month. In September 2013 20,000 workers including garment workers, students, civil servants, teachers, farmers, and Buddhist monks protesting against the government's 'rigging' of the election clashed with police and one worker was killed and others injured.

Cambodia's government has been described by Human Rights Watch's Southeast Asian Director, David Roberts, as a 'vaguely communist free-market state with a relatively authoritarian coalition ruling over a superficial democracy' (*Political Transition in Cambodia 1991-1999*, Curzon Publishers, 2001) which is quite accurate except Cambodia has nothing to do with 'communism'. Cambodia operates a capitalist market economy. It is notorious for corruption, ignoring human rights and suppressing political dissent. Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge

soldier, has been Prime Minister since 1985 and is leader of the Cambodia People's Party which is the renamed Kampuchea People's Revolutionary Party which was the sole party in the People's Republic of Kampuchea 1979-89 when Cambodia was occupied by the Vietnamese army. This Party had a Leninist ideology and Cambodia was run economically on Russian state capitalist lines. In the 1990s Hun Sen adopted free market capitalism, privatized state industries, and established private property rights.

During 2013 the Khmer working class have realised that their employers had contracted their standard of living at a time of increased productivity and profits in the garment industry. Strikes are necessary if the working class are to prevent themselves being driven into the ground by the never-satisfied demands of profit. The working class must organise to defend and improve wages and conditions of work or even just to keep pace with an inflationary standard of living.

The Garment Manufacturers Association of Cambodia estimates that over a quarter of working days in the last two years have been lost due to strikes. The garment industry supplying clothes and footwear mainly to the European and American markets represents the largest portion of Cambodia's manufacturing sector, accounting for 80 percent of the country's exports. The garment industry manufactures clothes for a huge range of British high street companies, including H&M, Gap, Marks and Spencer, Tesco and Levis. In 2012, the exports grew to \$4.61 billion, up 8 percent over 2011, and in the period from January to November 2013 the garment industry made \$5.1 billion, a 22 percent increase on 2012.

More savvy than assumed

David Webb, Cambodian programme director at the Solidarity Centre said 'Workers are, frankly, far more savvy than they get credit for, and can see these vast amounts of money being made off the backs of some of the poorest workers in the region and how little they get back in return' (*Guardian* 16 December). A woman worker called Khmon is quoted saying 'There is no

work in the countryside, so I have to work in the factories. The factories don't care about us. They pay us so little, work us so hard and throw us away when we cannot work for a moment' (*Guardian* 16 December). On May Day 2013 a garment factory worker named Chao Sinoun told Radio Free Asia 'The factory owner is exploiting my labour' (Sonorng Khe for *Radio Free Asia Khmer Service*, 1 May).

The May Day rally in Phnom Penh saw 10,000 garment and footwear factory workers with teachers and civil servants demanding wage increases, retirement pensions, reduced petrol prices, and the arrest of the killers of trade union activist Chea Victea in 2004. The same month saw two workers killed in a factory collapse at Wing Star Shoes owned by a Taiwanese company who make running shoes for Asics. A wage protest at a Nike Factory run by Sabrina Garment Manufacturing in the Kampang Speu province, west of Phnom Penh, involved 3,000 workers mostly women. They were seeking a \$14 pay rise to cover transport, rent and healthcare on top of the \$74 minimum wage but were attacked by riot police with stun batons and 23 workers were injured.

Workers during the national strike



A July 2013 Report on Working Conditions in Cambodia's Garment Sector produced by Better Factories Cambodia, an ILO project found inadequate working conditions, fire safety, health and safety violations and child labour. Ath Thorn, President, Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Democratic Union pointed out that Cambodia's Ministry of Labour found that garment workers needed at least \$156 per month to cover the cost of living. He added 'The current wages are too little and can't meet workers' needs' (*Morning Star* 28 December). 'The government and the factory owners know that workers cannot survive with the current salary' said Chea Mony, President, Free Trade Union of Workers (*Morning Star* 27 December).

The minimum wage per month was increased in May 2013 from \$60 to \$75 a month plus \$5 living allowance but the increase was swallowed up in rent increases and other expenses of living in the capital city such as inflation, rent increases, and job insecurity. The value of labour power may change because the values of the necessities the worker and their family consume has changed. If their value increased, then a wage increase would merely restore the position and allow the workers to consume the same amount.

Race to the bottom

Cambodia's garment industry continues to grow rapidly which can be attributed to the country's open economic policy which has drawn large amounts of foreign investment into this sector of the economy. Nearly 80 percent of the garment factories are owned by Chinese, Taiwanese and South Korean companies with only 5 percent owned by the Cambodian capitalist class. The capitalist class say the onus was on Western clothing chains to pay more for the garments they were buying from Cambodia's factories. Ken Loo, Secretary-General of the Garment Manufacturers Association of Cambodia said 'The garment industry is a footloose industry, it is not difficult for any investor to uproot and move its investment elsewhere. In Cambodia the industry is made up of predominantly foreign investors. If investors decide to relocate, there would be no local factories that would rise to take these places. We do not own the brand of the items we are producing so our profits are determined by the brands and



Leader of 'Party of Rescuing the Nation' Sam Rainsy

retailers who place orders with us, they have the ability and the finances to increase the minimum wage, not us. The focus has to be on the brands and retailers to start paying factories more, so that in return we have the ability to pay our workers more' (*Guardian* 16 December).

After the killing of workers in the New Year the Cambodian police forced 1,000 workers from their rally camp in Phnom Penh, and banned any further protests against the government. The State Prosecutors issued warrants for Sam Rainsy and his deputy to appear in court on 14 January on charges of inciting social unrest. On 7 January thousands of garment workers returned to work after the two week national strike. The strikes cost the garment industry approximately \$20 million in lost revenue, and orders could decline by 20 to 30 percent in 2014. Sam Rainsy said 'Now we are working on the diplomatic front, on the

commercial front, on the legal front. We are in touch with unions and workers' organisations all over the world to condemn violence on workers and to help workers to achieve the minimum wage' (*Morning Star* 8 January).

The close relations of the trade unions in Cambodia with this liberal party led by Rainsy is effectively a non-revolutionary approach for the Khmer working class. The Cambodian trade unions should not depart from the principle of an antagonism of interests between the working class and the capitalist class. When they collaborate with the capitalist class, the state or political parties such as the National Rescue Party they are departing from this principle. As well as campaigning for an increase in the minimum wage the garment workers trade unions should aim for the '*Abolition of the wages system.*'

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia, Surya

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P. Subedi said 'All parties, the Government, striking workers, trade unions, the factories and buyers needed to reassure protesting workers that they would develop a realistic wage structure' (*United Nations Radio* 27 December 2013). Van Son Leng, Chairman of Cambodia's Garment Manufacturers Association concluded 'It's bad that there were deaths and injuries but when there's violence and force is used, there's always going to be *collateral damage*. It's difficult to avoid' (*Wall Street Journal* 7 January).

The Khmer garment factory worker Khmon said 'The poor are always unlucky' (*Guardian* 16 December 2013) but, as our comrades in the Socialist Party of Canada have pointed out, there is



Prime Minister Hun Sen

a way-out for the trap the working class in Cambodia find themselves in:

The capitalist apologists have a hard time explaining the nineteenth century wage rates and conditions that capital is flocking to. Isn't capitalism supposed to bring widespread prosperity? If there is something lower, capital will flow there naturally like water flowing downhill. China is outsourcing its clothing orders to Bangladesh. If Cambodia can't get lower than Bangladesh in wages, conditions of work, labour and safety legislation, etc, you are out of luck. There are always greener pastures for capital, until, that is, we, the workers wake up and make all property and the resources therein the common heritage of all mankind' (The Socialist Party of Canada Secretary's Reports for November 1 and December 1, 2013).

and December 1, 2000.

The throwaway system

How capitalism treats old people is an increasing issue across much of the globe

Compared with other species, a human being requires very long periods of nurture, growth and development. Thus, parenting implies naturally assuming a long responsibility until offspring are able to survive independently. Yet there is no real obligation in the other direction. From a biological point of view, children bear no responsibility for supporting their parents. In an ideal world, children feel and appreciate their parents' love so they will return it by supporting and taking care of them late in life. Reality, however, can differ from the ideal.

This social contract that formed the bedrock of culture for centuries, built on the premise that parents would do almost anything to care for their children and then would end their lives in their children's care. No need for nursing or care homes for the elderly. But younger generations simply found themselves working harder in the hyper-competitive environment that drives capitalism and their parents are often left behind. Many elderly people now live out their final years poor and lonely, without family support. In Korea the elderly are committing suicide at historic rates: from 1,161 in 2000 to 4,378 in 2010. Capitalism with the sheer cruelty of the market has never been a way to strengthen and buttress the family and accord generational justice and respect. The forces of global capitalism are destroying the kind of society which allows and encourages stability, traditional families, and self-sufficient community. Capitalism destroys the very structure of societies. The safety net was created to save capitalism from itself, not to attack capitalism.

Our profit system makes men and women grow old prematurely. Millions look with dread upon the day when, once they have grown old, they will be discarded. Millions of workers struggle through life in penury and want towards a bleak and barren old age, to finally find rest at last in the council care home or the morgue.

It is not uncommon for health issues to become a factor for older workers. As the years progress, some things just begin to wear out and break down, ranging from knees and hearts to stamina and patience.

If the job is physically demanding, we may no longer possess the strength or agility to do what the job requires. Once the boss figures that out, ageing employees find themselves without a job. It is a sad state of

affairs when someone survives a career and makes it to retirement only to find they are too beaten and worn down to enjoy their final years.

More and more older workers are finding themselves out of a job because of structural changes. These reorganisations and reductions in staff have little to do with individual performance but with scales of production and cost-cutting. You may be doing a good job but find your job eliminated in a wave of redundancies. Tenure and seniority is a thing of the past in most industries. And if you lose your job after age 50, the job market competition tends to favour younger candidates who are often attractive to growing companies.

Once you are over 50, loss of employment can force a premature retirement. Even after prudent saving, you may find yourself forced to exit paying employment before you achieve your goals for financial security. It is increasingly challenging for those over 50 to return to the workforce. Many companies have a compulsory retirement age that employees must adhere to. When 65 rolls around, it is not a matter of choice but rather a policy that your career comes to an end. Even though you may still be very capable of performing your duties, you won't be welcome to stay on the job.

Old age should be about life being made more pleasant with everything society has to offer. After all, everyone holds onto the hope that he or she will someday enjoy what they now offer to others. The old should not be haunted by the thought that others are waiting for them to die in order to come into an inheritance. Nor by the fear that once they are old and helpless they will be thrown aside to vanish from all thought. When socialism is built the elderly will not depend on the charity and the alms of the community.

It must be impressed upon the minds of workers that the living standards of a generation of people at or near retiring age are being sacrificed to increase the proportion of resources going into government investment going to businesses. The problem is that people accept capitalism and its logic and therefore see no alternative. Under

capitalism welfare has always been an issue. If capitalism is to be judged by what is done for the least fortunate section of the community – the aged and

►p18



Scrapheap. Not there yet? You soon will be.

'The cost of living crisis'

Labour Party politicians at national and local level are going around talking about a 'cost of living crisis'. Presumably their spin-doctors have told them that this could be a vote-winner. They could be right as it's true that over the past few years the cost of living has been rising faster than wages and welfare benefits (except the state pension). But what can Labour do about this? Basically, nothing. They are not even promising to do much. It's just a ploy to give the impression that they care about people's concerns.

The cost of living is the cost of buying the things people need to keep themselves fit to work or, in the case of welfare recipients, to maintain a minimum standard of living. It goes up all the time these days as maintaining a 2 percent rate of currency inflation is deliberate government policy. But, with inflation, wages, which are also a price, go up too. As long as they go up at the same rate or more than the price of the things wage and salary workers need to buy then there is no extra problem, no 'cost of living crisis'. There's still the problem, of course, that they are never enough for a decent standard of living and that employers reap a profit from our work.

Wages at least keeping up with prices is what normally happens in the upswing phase of the capitalist business cycle, due to the law of supply and demand and trade union pressure. During the downturn phase, on the other hand, the increased unemployment exerts a downward pressure on wages which the unions are not always able to counter, and wages rise less than other prices. In this case, there is an additional 'cost of living crisis'. Which is the situation today and which the Labour Party is trying to exploit for vote-catching purposes.

In theory there are two ways of dealing with this: either increase money wages more or freeze prices. In the dim and distant past the Labour Party would have promised to increase people's incomes as the way-out. But not today. Experience of being the government has taught them that under capitalism priority has to be given to profits and profit-making as this

"Priority has to be given to profits - increasing wages is a non-starter..."

is what makes the system go round. Increasing wages at the expense of profits is a non-starter.

As to increasing benefits, there's absolutely no question of them doing this since they are anxious to get rid of their once attractive image as 'the welfare party'. Their spin-doctors have told them that, so successful has been the media campaign to present welfare recipients as 'scroungers,' this is now a vote-loser.

So, price control is the only option left. But, even here, they are not being serious. All they are promising is a two-year freeze on gas and electricity prices. But what about all the other bills for everyday living expenses? These are not going to be frozen as Labour know, once again from the experience of being the government under capitalism, that price controls don't work, at least not for any length of time and not without causing other economic problems. And they're nothing to do with Marxism as the *Daily Mail* claims. That's about getting

employers introduced by the last Labour government. Those on the minimum wage would get an increase in what their employer pays them, but a decrease in what the government does.

Faced with these cynical vote-catching ploys, most people won't really think it makes much difference which party or parties form the government. They are right. Whatever the politicians say to get elected, governments have virtually no control over the relationship between wages and other prices. This depends on which phase of its business cycle capitalism is in. Governments have not much choice other than to go along with what capitalism throws at them. That's why they are always betraying their promises. Not because they are necessarily dishonest, but because in promising measures to make capitalism work in the interest of wage and salary workers they are promising the impossible.

For socialists there is also a wider



rid of prices – and wages and profits – altogether.

The promise to freeze energy prices for a while is just a gesture designed to give the impression that they care. Unfortunately enough people seem to have been taken in to put Labour ahead in the opinion polls. To counter this, and give the impression that they too care, the Tories have floated the idea of an increase in the minimum wage. In real terms this is 10 percent lower than it was before the slump broke in 2008. The ulterior motive here is clear. It's a move to save on government spending as it will reduce the amount paid out as 'tax credits', the subsidy to low-paying

question. Why is there a 'cost of living'? Why do we have to pay for the things we need to live and enjoy life? Given the level of productivity achieved today, we could go over to a socialist society, based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production, where people could have free access to what they need in accordance with the principle 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs'. Then nobody would have to worry about where the money to pay the next bill is to come from as they wouldn't be charged for access to essentials such as heating and lighting.

ADAM BUICK

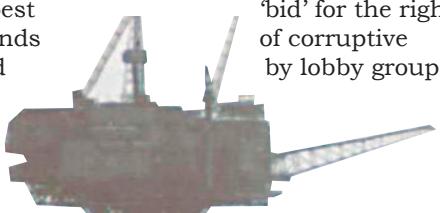
Political Vocabularies

'How should governments react to winning the lottery? For example, the UK / Norway find oil in the North Sea. Australia finds various minerals and then also gas that they can export. Specialist skills are required to extract the resources. Should the government sit back and let industry do their stuff, whilst skimming off some tax? Should the government take control? Should the people take control?'

This is a question I received from a friend on Facebook a little while ago. It is, perhaps, an example of a political vocabulary which originates in 'popular' media sources. A socialist would never use such phrases as 'Australia finds...' or 'Should the government take control'. Not because we agree or disagree with the associated ideas but because these phrases in themselves only serve to obscure political reality. The last part is, of course, the \$64,000 question. Sometimes I believe that we socialists get isolated in our own political vocabularies – steeped as we are in the study of politics, history and economics. After several years within a socialist community a specific vocabulary develops; particularly as a response to the same questions we get asked again and again. In any political analysis we always seek to emphasise 'class' as a designation of social organisation because, in part, it serves to deconstruct the very words that seek to deny its existence i.e. government, nation, industry and even 'the people'. Because of this, the use of the word 'class' for non-socialists, is deemed as controversial or even anachronistic! In the light of this let's re-examine the question:

When asked how should the governments of nation states react to the discovery of natural resources within their borders there is only one answer – they will react the way all governments in capitalism must. They will seek to exploit the resource so that the maximum profits will be attained by the parasitic class that they represent. This means the employment of companies who make the best to exploit. All kinds techniques used will press for different sectors of the capitalist class to

'bid' for the rights of corruptive by lobby groups



Natural resources:
a North Sea drilling platform

acquire this right from the government. Occasionally the state might take natural resources into 'public ownership'. This is done either to prevent a monopoly which might cause high prices to other sectors of the capitalist class or because the politicians themselves wish to retain ownership and the ensuing wealth. Thus concepts of 'Norway' or 'Australia' acting in the interests of the majority of the population within those geographic locations is nonsensical.

'Specialist skills' are, of course, essential to extract such wealth and it is the socialist contention that it is this labour (intellectual and physical) that gives the oil (in this case) its exchange value. It is not, as many bourgeois economists would have us believe, the rarity of a commodity that gives it value but the labour needed to extract it. There are many rare entities that have no value (whether utility or exchange) at all i.e. four-leaved clovers, river pearls, wisdom, rainbows, three-legged dogs etc, etc. It is only the difference between the value of the labour (wages) and the products it creates that makes vast profits. Some of these profits are paid as tax which goes toward the payment for infrastructure of the state. Again it is debateable whether this acts in the interest of the majority since wages in the 'public sector' are notoriously low and the resources created are of the poorest quality allowed by law (to maintain low tax rates). Now let's examine the concept of 'the people taking control'.

Again the question of vocabulary arises. The people' could refer to all of the humans in the world, the population of a nation state or merely adults with some kind of democratic franchise. Socialists do not use this designation because, we would contend, it does not correspond to a political category. Politics, in the final analysis, is about power. This power is derived from the relationship of a group or individual with the means of production (origin of wealth). In politics we can only define people in this way – as classes. Not to do so would



not constitute a political analysis (in any meaningful sense). Any objective economic study reveals that a tiny minority of the population live exclusively on dividends derived from profits while the rest of us are obliged to sell our labour to them to live. This majority or 'working class' needs to take control of natural resources and the means of production to rationalise and democratise society. Only when this is done can we speak of 'the people'. It is the liberation from class society that socialism seeks to achieve. Only when we are liberated from being defined by our relationship with production can we become truly human and justify any culture's inhabitants with the designation of 'the people'.

It is usually instructive to analyse the type of language used in any political question before making an attempt to answer it. Experience allows the answerer to frame their



response in a language most likely to be easily understood. Invariably this will initially contain a brief deconstruction of the words and concepts used to frame the question - which, in my experience, can frustrate the questioner. To him or her this can sound like prevarication since they usually have no concept of how politically loaded language is. However, this must be attempted because not to do so would mean using the same word with different definitions; rendering communication impossible. If the questioner is unwilling to indulge you in this quest to communicate my advice is to change the subject and attempt a subtle subversion of their language on another topic which, ostensibly, is unconnected with politics. Failing that, get another beer in.

WEZ

p15 continued

infirm – it will be judged and found wanting. This world possessed of vast resources should be free from the scourge of poverty. Money dominates our social life and our social practices and that can only produce inhumanity.

As Confucius say – 'The Master said: If there were an honorable way to get rich, I'd do it, even if it meant being a stooge standing around with a whip. But there isn't an honorable way, so I just do what I like.'

ALJO

"I've been teaching for 30 years, and I find this to be one of the best short films I have ever used" **DOUG BROWN, PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, NORTH ARIZONA UNIVERSITY**

Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff is a short film from The Socialist Party which questions some of the most basic assumptions about life in capitalism.

For a copy, complete the order form on page 7



Green recipe for raging inflation

'THE GREEN Party believes', reads a resolution carried at their annual conference in September, 'that the power to create money must be removed from private banks.' What power, and how?

At one time 'money' was defined just as the notes and coins issued by the government or a central bank, but modern economists have come to include bank loans too as money. This can be confusing if it is assumed that these two types of money are the same, as is often done. For instance, the Green Party resolution says that only 3 percent of the UK's 'money supply' is issued by the central bank as notes and coins, with the remaining 97 percent taking the form 'of credit that is *created* electronically by private banks through the accounting processes they follow when they make loans' (emphasis added).

This figure is correct (except that some of the 97 percent are loans made by other credit institutions) but, while the 3 percent is 'created' in the sense of not existing before, the 97 percent is not. It is already existing purchasing power, originally generated in production as wages and profits, which banks and other credit institutions transfer from savers to borrowers. The Green Party resolution assumes that this too has been created from nothing and wants to transfer this supposed power to a government agency so that 100 percent of the 'money supply' will be under government control:

'A Green Government will therefore develop and implement a programme of banking reform based on the following principles:

(a) All national currency (both in cash and electronic form) will be created, free of any associated debt, by a National Monetary Authority (NMA) that is accountable to Parliament.' (<http://policy.greenparty.org.uk/ec#Monetary>)

All money. Not that it would be 'debt-free' since money issued by the state is counted as part of the National Debt.

(d) Any new money created by the NMA will be credited to the account of the Government as additional revenue, to be spent into circulation in accordance with the budget approved by Parliament.'

That's much easier than the government having to raise revenue by taxes or borrowing, too easy in fact as the experience of countries like Zimbabwe shows.

For this scheme to work, banks and other credit institutions would have to be banned from making loans as these are part of the modern definition of the 'money supply'. This isn't explicitly stated but it follows that if alongside the activities of the NMA private banks were just to continue to make loans as before there would be a massive increase in the money supply (as most broadly defined today), with the NMA now 'creating' the equivalent of the 97 percent, far more fiat money than required by the functioning of the economy, on top of the activities of the private banks. Hello, Zimbabwe.

To avoid this the banks would have to be reduced to institutions which merely take in money and use it to make payments to and for depositors (or focus even more than is the case now on dodgy asset management activities). This would most likely create other economic problems, in particular depriving capitalist enterprises of a key source of funding, so slowing down capital accumulation. Maybe this is what the Green Party wants as it is opposed to 'growth', but under capitalism you can't stop this without provoking an economic crisis.

Clearly, those behind the Green Party's resolution have not thought it through, but then a party with no chance of forming the government can afford to have barmy policies.

The Threepenny Opera

LAST YEAR there was a semi-staging by director Ted Huffman of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's 1928 *Die Dreigroschenoper (The Threepenny Opera)* at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on London's South Bank. This performance was sung in German with English surtitles and had a linking narration specially written by Brecht for concert performances such as this.

The Threepenny Opera is an adaptation of John Gay's 1728 ballad opera *The Beggar's Opera* which is a satire on the corruption of the Walpole government in the aftermath of the financial crash of the South Sea Company. John Gay had a relish for low life, an affinity shared with Brecht who set *The Threepenny Opera* in a Soho of the lumpenproletariat of thieves, beggars, and whores.

Max Hopp as the Narrator sang *Die Moritat von Mackie Messer (The Ballad of Mack the Knife)*. Max Hopp recently had a leading role in the William S Burroughs-Tom Waits 'musical fable' *The Black Rider* at the Theater Basel.

Low-Dive Jenny performed by Meow Meow sang *Seeräuberjenny (Pirate Jenny)*: 'you toss me a penny, and I'm always quick to thank/Even though you see my rags/ And fifty canons/Will fire at the shore/My Sirs, there your laughter will stop/Because the walls will fall/And the city will be level with the ground.'

Mark Padmore as Macheath and Nicholas Folwell as 'Tiger' Brown, the corrupt police chief duet on the *Kanonen-Song (Cannon Song)*: 'young men's blood goes on being red/And the army goes on recruiting.'

Macheath and Jenny duet on the materialist II *Dreigroschenfinale, Denn wovon lebt der Mensch? (Second Threepenny Opera Finale, What Keeps Mankind Alive)*; 'Food is the first thing: morals follow on/You gentlemen who think you have a mission/to purge us from the seven deadly sins/ Should first sort out the basic food position.'

The Threepenny Opera is notable for Weill's music which was scored for a jazz dance band drawing on the rhythms and idioms of the dance music of the time. Weill's music is a reaction to the bourgeois genre of operetta. He emulates John Gay in his use of vernacular musical styles.

Brecht aims his satire at the corruption, hypocrisy, greed, self-satisfaction of the capitalist class, the venality of aspirations to bourgeois respectability and what the bourgeoisie had in common with ruthless criminals. Macheath says 'What is the burgling of a bank to the founding of a bank?'

Theodore Adorno judged it the most important event since Berg's *Wozzeck* and Brecht later wrote

'young proletarians suddenly came to the theatre, in some cases for the first time, and then quite often came back.'

Hull Ferens Art Gallery

THE FERENS Art Gallery in Hull which opened in 1927 is a great example of how impressive a municipal art collection can be outside the metropolis. In fact this gallery has *A View on the Grand Canal* (1728) by 'Venetia Vedutista' Canaletto, one of many 'views' which were once in demand by the aristocracy and haute bourgeoisie as souvenirs of the Grand Tour, and one of the few in an English municipal collection.

Impressionist Laura Knight's evocative *Dressing the Children*



Laura Knight, *Dressing the Children*, 1906

(1906) portrays a woman dressing children by firelight in a kitchen with a cat in the centre of the picture. It was painted in the cottage of an ironstone miner and his family in the fishing village of Staithes on the Yorkshire coast where Knight lived in an artists' colony. Knight records in her autobiography how she saw in the cottage 'greater poverty and misery than it seemed possible for anyone to bear.' The family relied heavily on Knight's income, and eventually she and her husband gave the family five pounds to buy a horse and cart and to set up a fish selling business. Only part of the loan was repaid, the remainder was offered as a gift. In the Second World War Knight was a 'War Artist' and painted the iconic feminist *Ruby Loftus screwing a Breech-ring*.

The semi-abstract Keith Vaughan's *Coastal Defences (Seaford, East Sussex)* (c1959-62) is abstract assemblies of two dimensional geometrical shapes although Vaughan always rooted his paintings in observed reality, and was never completely abstract. There is a Henry Moore sculpture *Working Model for Seated Woman* (1980) which is a figure seated on a solid but low block base for support with her cloth-bound knees forced upwards by the pose.

Niccolò Renieri's baroque *St Sebastian tended by the Holy Irene* (1625) is in the style of the great Caravaggio with its strong lighting contrasts (chiaroscuro) and a preoccupation with the human body. A Roman warrior, the legend goes, Sebastian served in the private guard of the Emperor Diocletian, who sentenced him to be shot with arrows as punishment for his Christian faith, but as he lay dying and wounded he was found by the Holy Irene and nursed back to health. This painting is a very popular piece of work in the Ferens Art Gallery due to its striking nature and scale, it has been described as 'one of his most successful works, perhaps even his masterpiece.'

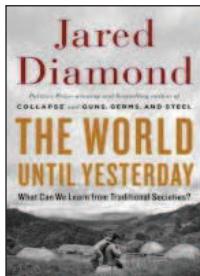
STEVE CLAYTON



Laura Knight, *Ruby Loftus screwing a Breech-ring*, 1943

Living in the Past

The World Until Yesterday: What Can We Learn from Traditional Societies? Jared Diamond. Penguin £8.99.



This is another wide-ranging book by Diamond, following *Guns, Germs and Steel* and *Collapse*. By 'traditional societies' here are meant those living in small

groups and subsisting by hunting-gathering or agriculture. This covers a spectrum from bands with just a few dozen individuals, through tribes with hundreds of people, to chiefdoms with several thousand people and more complex social organisation. All humans lived in one of these systems till around 11,000 years ago (which, in evolutionary terms, really is 'yesterday') and many have done so far more recently.

Traditional societies of course differ, and not just in terms of the size of the group. Thus many such societies have engaged in quite bloody inter-group warfare, but plenty have not, and Diamond argues, 'All human societies practise both violence and cooperation; which trait appears to predominate depends on the circumstances.' War may take place over resources such as land (and women). But nobody fights all or even most of the time, whereas we have to co-operate in order to survive. And even those who fight have to co-operate with each other against the enemy.

This theme of co-operation is returned to when discussing childhood and play: 'Whereas many American games involve keeping score and are about winning and losing, it is rare for hunter-gatherer games to keep score or identify a winner. Instead, games of small-scale societies often involve sharing, to prepare children for adult life that emphasizes sharing and discourages contests.' This illustrates one of the book's strengths, its recognition that the way people live now is absolutely not the only possible way.

Diamond does claim, though, that almost all human societies have had religion or 'something like it'. Religion is claimed to fill various functions, such as providing comfort ('the heart of a heartless world', as Marx said), which may explain why, on the whole, poorer countries tend to be more religious than wealthier ones. The US, of course, is an exception to

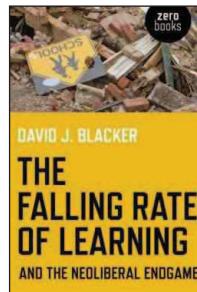
this tendency.

In his epilogue, Diamond makes the point that modern-day hunter-gatherers who encounter Western life-styles are keen to adopt them, as they are understandably attracted by material goods, education, healthcare, longer life-spans, and so on. And some traditional life-styles have advantages and shortcomings which may be two sides of the same coin: nobody is lonely but there is little room for personal privacy. So earlier social forms were not versions of paradise. But, for instance, traditional societies had few or none of the non-communicable diseases that kill most Westerners today, such as hypertension and heart attacks.

PB

School's Out

David J. Blacker: The Falling Rate of Learning and the Neoliberal Endgame. Zero Books £15.99.



Remember Tony Blair and his 'Education, education, education'? That was how he set out his priorities in 1997, supposedly as a way of improving people's lives

and also making British capitalism more efficient and competitive. But with the recession leading to cuts to education budgets, things have not quite worked out that way.

David Blacker's title is a nod to the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, the view that, as technological progress continues, the proportion of constant capital (machines, buildings, etc) to variable capital (paid out in wages) will rise – see www.worldsocialism.org/articles/introduction_to_marxian_economics2.php. But as it is only labour that produces surplus value and so profit, it follows that the rate of profit (profit as a proportion of total capital) will fall. However, there are so many counteracting forces that this is at most a tendency. One consequence of technological progress, though, is a reduced demand for labour power, including educated labour power. Hence, according to Blacker, not just increases in unemployment and part-time jobs but 'an abandonment of the ideal of the universal distribution of education', or 'the falling rate of learning'.

His book has a mainly US focus

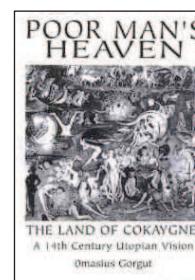
but the general points are more widely applicable. One response has been to see education as itself a source of profit, with widespread privatisation. Another has been to transfer much of the cost of higher education to students/workers themselves, by means of loans and debt. US student debt is now well over \$1 trillion, and debts pursue many workers throughout their lives, since (unlike with credit cards) education debt is not discharged by personal bankruptcy. But if attending college and being weighed down by debt is an unpleasant prospect, not gaining a degree is even worse, as it can lead at best to a minimum-wage job ('the fear of McDonalds').

Blacker classes medical bills together with educational loans as 'existential debt', which can haunt people for decades. They should, he suggests, be a focus for protest, part of a campaign for free higher state education. At the same time, though, he argues that educational activism is a waste of time, on the grounds that reforming schools will not usher in serious social and political reforms. It is certainly true that schools and colleges essentially reflect the society around them, and that it is only a revolution in the way society is organised that will lead to proper changes in the function and content of education.

PB

Dreaming of the future

Poor Man's Heaven: The Land of Cokayne and Other Utopian Visions by Omasius Gorgut, Past Tense, 2012.



The Land of Cokayne was a Middle English poem, the word 'Cokayne' from Old French 'cocaigne', probably meaning 'cake'. Thomas Aquinas had emphasised

hierarchy, private property and class divisions as the natural order of human society. Eden was lost, entry to heaven restricted by Church teaching, therefore Cokayne was a land of no work, free access, common ownership, peace, happiness, and social justice. Cokayne was a utopia for the serf offering relief from labour and the struggle for food in a hostile natural world where a bad season might mean absolute famine.

Peasants looked to a lost communist golden age.

AL Morton saw Cokaygne as 'arising from lower class self-awareness in terms of class conflict'. Gorgut sees the Peasant's Revolt as 'serfs ... becoming aware of their servitude.' John Ball preached 'have your reward both on earth and in heaven. For I say that earth and heaven are not two but one, when Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman? From the beginning all men were created equal by nature.' Gorgut writes 'a land with no lords, no clergy, no serfs, but equality under God and the king, confirm that many of the poor believed a Return to Eden was achievable in this life.'

Millenarianism was rife but what was coming to an end was not the world but a mode of economic production, i.e. feudalism. With the rise of capitalism moralising enters into the world of Cokaygne reflecting bourgeois protestant morality evident in the Pieter Bruegel the Elder painting *The Land of Cockaigne* with its portrayal of gluttony and sloth.

German peasant leader Thomas Müntzer attempted to establish Cokaygne declaring 'All property should be held in common', and in the English Revolution Digger Gerrard Winstanley wrote of the 'the Earth as a Common Treasury'. Gorgut writes of America 'elevating the New World to Cockayne-like stature' with the community of Merry Mount, Massachusetts where 'settlers, runaway slaves

and servants and native Americans lived together communally, brewing excellent beer and dancing around an 60 foot maypole. This attempt to blend old world carnival fun with practical race-mixing and egalitarianism was denounced by puritan pilgrims who feared and hated everything wild and free.'

American hobo songs of the early twentieth century such as *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*, and *Poor Man's Heaven* evoked Cokaygne. They still found resonance in the 1980s when *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* was sung by Tom Waits in the 'hobo' film *Ironweed*, Rudy Wurlitzer made the film *Candy Mountain*, and the Indie band The Motorcycle Boy sang their own lyrics to *Big Rock Candy Mountain*: 'dancing with the working man, looking for the big rock candy mountain.'

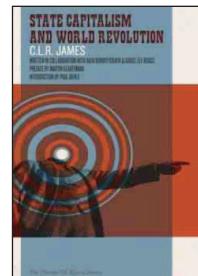
Gorgut closes his book with a quote from Hal Rammel: 'Liberated from the everyday, we dream of the world's limitless possibilities, the pleasures of life, and the bountiful earth, one day free for all.'

SPC



Repudiation

State Capitalism and World Revolution. By CLR James. PM Press. 2013.



CLR James will perhaps be better known for his book on the slave rebellion in Haiti during the French Revolution, *The Black Jacobins*, and for his writings on cricket, but at one time he was a leading Trotskyist.

Originally an internal document circulated in 1950 within the so-called 'Fourth International' which Trotsky and a handful of his followers had set up in 1938, *State Capitalism and World Revolution* was a contribution to a discussion on its future political orientation, and it has been republished here. The 'orthodox' majority wanted to stick to Trotsky's own view that Russia was still a 'workers state' because of the state ownership and planned economy that existed there and so was better than capitalism and deserving of working class support.

James showed that state ownership and a planned economy was not socialism and that it was absurd to describe as belonging to the 'workers' a state in which the workers were oppressed and exploited. He went further and argued that this type of state capitalism was the future of capitalism and that in supporting



Who Benefits From Benefits Street?

Benefits Street (Channel 4): yet another tawdry docusoap which reveals how some people just leech off others. The real parasites here are, of course, the programme-makers – feeding off the lives of the people they film.

The show follows some of the residents of a terraced street in an area of Birmingham which has the highest unemployment rate in Britain. Their lives are tough enough, struggling on low incomes and with little room for manoeuvre. But on top of that, now they also have to deal with the stigma and furore caused by the negative way they've been depicted.

Some of the participants told the press they were given the impression that the show would focus on community spirit, rather than life on benefits. They have also said that the programme-makers bribed them to get the shots ed, including complaint-magnet footage of people buying drugs and preparing to shoplift.

Benefits Street doesn't benefit

the participants who now feel cheated and humiliated, nor the viewers manipulated into making distorted generalisations about benefit claimants. Instead, it's the TV companies who have cashed an unusually large giro. The second episode had over a million more viewers than the first, which, with 4.3million voyeurs, was already Channel 4's most-watched show for over a year. Extra publicity has come with all the controversy. Hundreds of complaints have been made to Channel 4 and Ofcom, and thousands have signed an online petition for the show to be dropped.

Sadly, the row has been a distraction from scenes in the programme which should prompt more debate about capitalism's failings and how they affect people. For example, a group of Romanians are left destitute (and unable to claim benefits or state assistance) after escaping from their gangster boss.

The producers of *Benefits Street* have maintained that the programme is 'fair and balanced', but in reality it's as fair and balanced as a broken see-saw.

The editing, title and format of the show aim to exploit, rather than express the participants' struggles. The producers have been taken in by the prevailing mood among the elite to demonise those victimised most by capitalism.

MIKE FOSTER



Meetings

it the orthodox Trotskyists were in effect supporting capitalism. This was true then and it is still true today.

James was wrong about full state capitalism being the next stage of capitalism (but in the 1940s he was not alone in making this mistake) and also about still regarding the Bolshevik coup as a 'proletarian revolution'. In the preface to the 1956 re-edition (reproduced here), however, he explained:

The political conclusions of this economic analysis can be summed up in its total repudiation of the Leninist theory and practice of the Vanguard Party for our era.'

State Capitalism and Revolution is in fact a total repudiation of Trotskyism and worth reading for that.

ALB



Latest issue of Socialist Party of Canada journal. Obtainable from 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN for £2 (including postage). Cheques payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain".

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

Birmingham

Saturday 15 February 2.00pm
Workers' Councils, Parliament
WHICH WAY FORWARD TO SOCIALISM?

Debate at Midlands Discussion Forum.
Socialist Party speaker: Adam Buick
The Anchor Inn, 308 Bradford Street,
Digbeth, Birmingham B5 6ET (about
13 minutes walk from Birmingham New
Street railway station).

London

Chiswick

Tuesday 18 February 8.00pm
WHAT DO WE MEAN BY REVOLUTION?

Speaker: Adam Buick
Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall,
Heathfield Terrace, W4 4JN.

London

Clapham

Sunday 16 February 6.00pm
Film: *Spirit of '45*
Socialist Party Head Office,
52 Clapham High Street,
London SW4 7UN.

Glasgow

Wednesday 19 February 8.30pm
CAPITALISM IS A RISKY BUSINESS
Speaker: John Cumming
Community Central Halls,
304 Maryhill Road G20 6HT.

London

Wednesday 5 March 2014
Debate 'WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT CAPITALISM?'

Peter Tatchell, human rights campaigner and **Clifford Slapper** for the Socialist Party

Main Hall, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

6.30pm doors for 7.00pm start

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a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of

the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

50 Years Ago

The coming election

IT WOULD be a very dull person indeed who did not notice a certain something in the political air; a flurry of optimistic statements from members of the government, a series of sober suggestions which are supposed to help improve the world from the opposition. The two great political parties resemble nothing so much as a couple of shopkeepers who, anxious to attract the larger share of a spending spree,



are frantically decorating their windows with every tawdry piece of tinsel they can find in their lumber rooms. (...)

There is no point in our trying to predict who will win—even if that were possible. But we can confidently forecast what will follow the election, whichever party forms the next government.

The working class will continue to struggle over their wages and other working conditions; in other words there will be more strikes and similar disputes. The government will attempt to hold wages in check and to persuade the working class that any rise they may have should be only a small one, and one related to a more intensive productive effort. There will be more tension on the international field—more clashes at places like Berlin, Cyprus, Borneo. There will be more conferences on how to ease these tensions and how to disarm capitalism. None of them will come to anything.

The working class, afflicted by the usual struggle to live, will become dissatisfied with their new government and may express this dissatisfaction by defeating government candidates in by-elections and replacing them with those of another party pledged to carry on the capitalist social system. This dissatisfaction is an inevitable part of capitalism because the problems which give rise to unrest are also part of the private property system.

The only solution to this calamitous muddle is the establishment of Socialism. It is simply not possible for any leader to make glamorous promises about that because the key to Socialism is the knowledge of the people who will set it up. In the election campaigns of the capitalist parties, knowledge is an alien word. How many people, among the mass who are hypnotised by the tinsel, will stand out by knowing and understanding and voting for Socialism?

(*Socialist Standard*, February 1964)

ACTION REPLAY

Playing On

THE AIM of boxing is to hit your opponent, though not to punch him senseless. Other sports also lead to head injuries, many of them serious. In November last year the Tottenham goalkeeper Hugo Lloris was allowed to carry on playing despite being concussed in an accidental collision. This was sufficiently controversial for MP Chris Bryant to raise the matter in Parliament. 'I know there are commercial interests in keeping players on the pitch,' he said (outside the Commons), 'but there is a long-term health interest in taking precautionary action' (*Daily Telegraph*, 8 November). There are commercial interests in keeping players fit and healthy too, so the financial aspect cuts both ways.

In January 2011 fourteen-year-old Ben Robinson died after a school rugby union game. Three times he was sent back on to play after blows to his head. Coaches, officials and his watching parents were worried to varying extents, and just before the final whistle, Ben collapsed and never regained consciousness. The pathologist concluded that it was the succession of knocks to the head that killed him, not one single blow (*Guardian*, 14

December 2013).

If Ben had been removed from the field after being initially concussed, he would probably have been fine. But at grassroots level, many coaches and officials are unaware of the recommended procedures, which are not clearly publicised by rugby boards.

Professional rugby players are becoming bigger and faster, which is bound to increase the possibilities of injury in tackles and scrums. It is possible that the



authorities will receive legal claims from former players, as happened with the National Football League in the US (they reached a

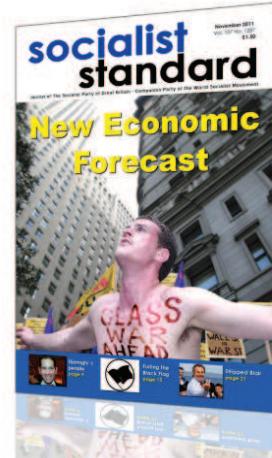
\$765m settlement).

No doubt insisting, at school and amateur level, that players carry on is part of the macho culture, the idea of toughness, of not quitting; the referee at the game where Ben Robinson died said he thought some of the players were being 'drama queens' (these were schoolkids, remember). And taking proper care of players would require a lot of effort and organisation, and surely money too. But a sport that cannot look after its players properly is not a safe sport.

PB

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Another Example Of Exploitation

Capitalism distorts everything it touches. It even distorts the English language. The use of the term 'earned' is a case in point. 'Jonathan Ruffer, the philanthropic fund manager, is believed to have earned close to £12m last year after another bumper performance by his boutique investment firm. Pre-tax profits at Ruffer Management rose 6% to £115m' (*Sunday Times*, 22 December). How did Ruffer 'earn' a million quid per month? He didn't of course. He exploited men and women of the working class by that staggering figure. That is the basis of the capitalism system.

Economic Recovery?

A slight fall in the unemployment figures has led to politicians talking about an economic recovery, but for large parts of the British population this is a complete myth. 'Advisers at the homeless charity Shelter are taking 500 calls a day from distraught people. ... The anxiety and emotion that pours into the headsets of crisis advice workers in this crowded fifth-floor Sheffield call centre offers a snapshot of the UK's worsening homelessness crisis. Advisers at Shelter's helpline are processing more calls than ever. Last year there was a 15% increase in the volume of calls – a reflection, staff think, of the degree to which people are struggling with rising house prices, soaring rents, cuts to housing benefit and the long shadow of the recession' (*Guardian*, 23 December). Perhaps a shift answering these desperate calls to the Shelter helpline would help politicians to get a better picture of the real situation for thousands of homeless workers.

Amassing A Fortune

At a time when millions of people are trying to survive on the equivalent of \$2 a day it is worthwhile looking at the immense wealth of the super-rich. 'Warren Buffett spent most of 2013 amassing fortunes of over £23 million a day through investments into food

manufacturing giants like Heinz, which he bought earlier this year. The investor topped the Wealth-X 'gainers' list for 2013, having made a staggering £7.7 billion since January to bring his estimated net worth to a cool £36 billion' (*Independent*, 25 December). At least the *Independent* did not insult its readers by claiming he 'earned' £23 million a day but used the term 'amassing'.



Upper Class Arrogance

The arrogance of the owning class knows no bounds. Take the case of Yevgeny Chichvarkin, the Russian reputed to have a fortune of £150m, who now lives in London and has opened a wine store in Mayfair for the super-rich called Hedonism. He currently offers a bottle of wine priced at £120,000 and has on offer a bottle of 55-year-old Glenfiddich whiskey at around £123,000. He blithely boasts of his customers. 'It's a present for somebody who has seen everything in this world. For some people who have been rich for a long, long time. It is quite hard to make an impression' (*Guardian*, 28 December).

Mind That Gap

At a time when many workers are concerned about losing their homes nothing better illustrates the gap between them and the owning class than the housing market. 'The Bishops Avenue in Hampstead, or 'Billionaire's Row' as it is commonly known, has been named by Lloyd's Bank as the second most

Voice from the Back

expensive street in England and Wales – the average house price of £6.2 million still, incredibly, putting it below Egerton Crescent in Kensington and Chelsea, where houses sell for an average of £7.4 million' (*Times*, 31 December). Not much concern here about the 'bedroom tax' or difficulties in meeting the mortgage payments unlike these unfortunates: 'Rising bills and high costs are pushing many household budgets 'to breaking point', with one in 11 people worried they will not be able to afford their rent or mortgage this month, according to research from Shelter' (*Guardian*, 3 January).



The Profit System's Awful Cost

The development of capitalism grows at breakneck speed in China, but at a terrible human cost. 'Between 350,000 and 500,000 Chinese die prematurely each year because of the country's disastrous air pollution, says China's former health minister. The equivalent of the population of Bristol dies each year in China because of lethal air pollution, according to Chen Zhu, who was the country's Health minister until last year' (*Daily Telegraph*, 7 January). In the mindless drive for bigger and bigger profits for the owning class the working class have to pay in ill health and premature death.

FREE LUNCH

